

# Santi

## *Tired of Being Tired (?)*

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Between the reality we live in and the idea of what it was meant to be, we eat our apple a day,<sup>1</sup> patiently believing in a system designed for labour to reward, for medicine to cure and for justice to prevail. *Tired of Being Tired (?)* is an exercise of semantic satiation, the same words, objects, and places becoming obscured by repetition, solid melting into liquid. Tired of being tired of navigating murky waters, we return to the surface, the vantage point of which permits us a better view of the curvature of the Earth.

From the ruins of great narratives of the past century was supposed to come a homogeneous present where “peace” means peace, and “freedom” means freedom. It was a promise: human dignity is inviolable, language giving ideology its footing. Fond of trusting the face value of things, the cultural memory of a much-anticipated reality haunts the present moment, making it neither present nor complete.<sup>2</sup> The disillusionment with dreams of fulfilment and collective well-being has left voids that are continuously being stretched by social alienation. Landing in spaces where a given authority – whether religion, state, or scientific progress – dictates how the world works; these voids can easily turn into terrifying slippery slopes, e.g. wellness-to-fascism pipelines.<sup>3</sup> Advocating for reason in an already reasonable world, this exhibition turns towards the side effects of language.

The increasing polarisation of political and social life – put on steroids by recent global health crises, and routinely accelerated by social media – has created a distorted reality Naomi Klein calls the Mirror World.<sup>4</sup> There, language, once reliably indicative of one’s politics, has become slippery. The same anthems now serve antonymous means, as the needle of the political compass loses its magnetism, and apple cider vinegar gains magical properties. Half-truths, propaganda, conspiracies and other usual suspects, strangely claim the linguistic techniques once used to deconstruct Western hegemonies,<sup>5</sup> and put reality on a nauseating merry-go-round of misinformation. Co-opted left, right and centre, Orwell’s *1984* in itself has become a case of doublethink; if you criticise big pharma too loudly, you risk sounding like an antivaxxer; exerting your democratic right to protest renders you radical.

Perhaps what has failed us in the first place is trusting our relationship to certainty, the confidence that a given word

captures and replicates meaning accurately – whatever meaning that may be. The more words used, the more information they give rise to, the more information there is, the more co-existing truths are being produced; and eventually, as complexity builds up, it gets easier and easier to manipulate reality into one’s preferred political stance.<sup>6</sup> Assured that “Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose”,<sup>7</sup> it becomes increasingly difficult to identify one.

*Tired of Being Tired (?)* references a waiting room, a stage in the theatre of problem and solution, frozen in its transitory stillness. The exhibition is composed of surfaces: magazines with missing headlines, multicolour spills, half radioactive, half decayed, paintings that flatten classical and ultra-contemporary methodologies. Objects and information catering to no one, managing anxiety, providing just the minimum degree of comfort and structure: take a number, find a seat, browse a magazine. In the next room, melting into whatever mold may encapsulate a given expectation, the “solution” is presented as set and in flux at once. An experiment gone wrong or a scientific breakthrough, “the remedy for all ills” dilutes the line between aid and malpractice.

The molds in question reference the malleability of all that can, and inevitably will, fill them: but here and for now, as they remain outlines only, the silver lining silhouettes their potential; as we tire of waiting for the water to turn clear, collective thought lucid, ideological hypocrisy self-aware. Now tired of being tired, as the vision grows blurry, the outlines and depth within them come into focus, illuminated by dappled light on their surface.

– Pia Zeitzen and Sasha Shevchenko

1 Radiohead, ‘Fitter Happier’ in ‘OK Computer’ (1997).

2 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (1993), Routledge; 1st edition (5 April 2006).

3 James Ball, *The Other Pandemic: How QAnon Contaminated the World*, (2023), Bloomsbury Publishing.

4 Naomi Klein, *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World* (2023), Penguin.

5 E.g. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966); Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (1967); Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), etc.

6 Peter Pomerantsev, *This Is Not Propaganda: Adventures in the War Against Reality* (2019), Faber & Faber.

7 Gertrude Stein, ‘Sacred Emily’ (1913), published in *Geography and Plays* (1922), University of Wisconsin Press (30 Nov. 1992).